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EXAMINER	
MUMMERT, STEPHANIE KANE	
ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
1637	
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/669,976	ENGEL ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	STEPHANIE K. MUMMERT	1637	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *12/17/07*.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,4-16 and 23-25* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,4-16 and 23-25* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Applicant's amendment filed on December 17, 2007 is acknowledged and has been entered. Claims 1-2, 4-5 and 23-24 have been amended. Claim 3 has been canceled. Claim 25 has been added. Claims 1-2, 4-16 and 25 are pending. Claims 17-22 are withdrawn from consideration as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

Claims 1-2, 4-16 and 23-25 are discussed in this Office action.

All of the amendments and arguments have been thoroughly reviewed and considered but are not found persuasive for the reasons discussed below. Any rejection not reiterated in this action has been withdrawn as being obviated by the amendment of the claims. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

This action is made FINAL.

New Grounds of Rejection

Claims 23 and 24 which were inadvertently omitted from the previous office action have been added to the statement of rejection. As applicant's response indicates that the claims were considered rejected through the previous grounds of rejection, no apparent confusion was caused by this omission.

Specification

The incorporation of essential material in the specification by reference to an unpublished U.S. application, foreign application or patent, or to a publication is improper. Applicant is required to amend the disclosure to include the material incorporated by reference, if the material is relied upon to overcome any objection, rejection, or other requirement imposed by the Office. The amendment must be accompanied by a statement executed by the applicant, or a practitioner representing the applicant, stating that the material being inserted is the material previously incorporated by reference and that the amendment contains no new matter. 37 CFR 1.57(f).

For example, regarding the incorporation by reference of the chemical modification of the DNA polymerase as amended in the instant claims, Applicant references a foreign application, European Patent Application No. 99 110 426, which corresponds to US Patent 6,183,998. Incorporating by reference to the foreign application is improper.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. Claims 1-2, 4-11, 16 and 23-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Backus et al. (US Patent 5,703,366; January 1998) in view of Bustin, SA (Journal of Molecular Endocrinology, 2000, vol. 25, p. 169-193) and further in view of Birch et al. (US Patent 5,773,258; June 1998). Backus discloses a method of amplification of multiple target nucleic acids in the presence of a nonionic, polymeric volume exclusion agent (Abstract).

With regard to claim 1, Backus teaches a method for the coamplification of two or more target nucleic acids having different sequence compositions, said method comprising at least 15

primary amplification cycles (col. 2, line 67 to col. 3, line 3), each amplification cycle comprising the sequential steps of:

(A) heating a reaction mixture comprising two or more target nucleic acids and a hot start DNA polymerase, or their primer extension products, at a first temperature, T1, for denaturation of the strands of the target nucleic acids or their primer extension products (col. 3, lines 4-8; col. 7, lines 11-19, where the inclusion of a polymerase and the inclusion of an antibody specific to the DNA polymerase which inhibits enzymatic activity below about 50°C and which is inactivated at higher temperatures), and

(B) priming the denatured strands with a set of unmodified or modified primers specific to and hybridizable with opposing strands of each target nucleic acid to be amplified, by cooling to a second temperature, T2 (col. 3, lines 9-12), and

(C) either as a continuation of step (B) or in a separate step, forming primer extension products in a reaction mixture of PCR reagents, by incubation at a third temperature, T3, provided that when priming and primer extension product formation are carried out in the same step, T2 and T3 are the same (col. 3, lines 13-18),

(D) in the course of the reaction in each amplification cycle or in an amplification cycle after the last primary amplification cycle, detecting two or more of the primer extension products having different sequence composition as an indication of coamplification of the target nucleic acids (col. 3, lines 46-48); an improvement comprising using the DNA polymerase included in the reaction mixture of step (A), a modified thermostable hot start DNA polymerase enzyme that becomes active only after incubation at temperatures above 50oC (col. 3, lines 4-8; col. 7, lines 11-19, where the inclusion of a polymerase and the inclusion of an antibody specific to the DNA

polymerase which inhibits enzymatic activity below about 50°C and which is inactivated at higher temperatures), and using in at least one of the primary amplification cycles, 1 to 20 weight % of a nonionic polymeric volume exclusion agent (col. 3, lines 19-21, where the disclosed percentage of 4 weight % falls within the range(s) claimed).

With regard to claim 2 and 4, Backus teaches a method for the coamplification of two or more target nucleic acids having different sequence compositions, said method comprising at least 15 primary amplification cycles (col. 3, lines 22-26), each amplification cycle comprising the sequential steps of:

(A) heating a reaction mixture comprising two or more target nucleic acids and a hot start DNA polymerase, or their primer extension products, at a first temperature, T1, for denaturation of the strands of the target nucleic acids or their primer extension products (col. 3, lines 27-31, col. 7, lines 11-19, where the inclusion of a polymerase and the inclusion of an antibody specific to the DNA polymerase which inhibits enzymatic activity below about 50°C and which is inactivated at higher temperatures), and

(B) priming the denatured strands with a set of unmodified or modified primers specific to and hybridizable with opposing strands of each target nucleic acid to be amplified, by cooling to a second temperature, T2 (col. 3, lines 32-35), and

(C) either as a continuation of step (B) or in a separate step, forming primer extension products in a reaction mixture of PCR reagents, by incubation at a third temperature, T3, provided that when priming and primer extension product formation are carried out in the same step, T2 and T3 are the same (col. 3, lines 36-41), and

(D) in the course of the reaction in each amplification cycle or in an amplification cycle after the last primary amplification cycle, detecting two or more of the primer extension products having different sequence composition as an indication of coamplification of the target nucleic acids (col. 3, lines 46-48); an improvement comprising using as the DNA polymerase included in the reaction mixture of step (A), a modified thermostable hot start DNA polymerase enzyme that becomes active only after incubation at temperatures above 50oC (col. 7, lines 11-19, where the inclusion of a polymerase and the inclusion of an antibody specific to the DNA polymerase which inhibits enzymatic activity below about 50°C and which is inactivated at higher temperatures), and using, in at least one of the primary amplification cycles, 1 to 20 weight % of a nonionic polymeric volume exclusion agent (col. 3, lines 42-45, wherein the disclosed percentage of 4 weight % falls within the claimed range(s)).

With regard to claim 5, Backus teaches a method according to one of claims 1, 2 or 4, characterized in that the volume exclusion agent is selected from the group consisting of a polyether, a reaction product of a sugar with epichlorohydrin, a polysaccharide, and a polyacrylate (col. 7, lines 36-41).

With regard to claim 6, Backus teaches a method according to claim 5, characterized in that the volume exclusion agent is selected from the group of polyethers of the general formula;

$$H\text{-}(\text{-}O\text{-}R\text{-})_n\text{-}H$$

wherein R is an alkylene bridge of 1 to 6 carbon atoms - branched or unbranched - and n is an integer of 15 to 1000 (col. 3, lines 42-48).

With regard to claim 7, Backus teaches an embodiment of claim 6, characterized in that R may represent l,2-ethylene, l,3-propylene, l,2-propylene, 2-hydroxy-l,3-propylene, 3-

hydroxy-l,2-propylene, l,4-butylene, l,3-butylene, or l,2-hexylene (col. 7, lines 48-52).

With regard to claim 8, Backus teaches an embodiment of claim 6, characterized in that the polyether is poly(ethylene glycol) (col. 7, lines 53-56, where it is noted that a preferred R group is polyethylene glycol).

With regard to claim 9, Backus teaches an embodiment of claim 8, characterized in that the polytethylene glycol) has a molecular weight in the range of 1000 daltons to 2,000,000 daltons (col. 7, lines 59-67, where it is noted that the preferred range is between about 1000 to about 20,000, wherein the term about represents +/-10% and wherein the preferred range of molecular weights falls within the range as claimed, presuming that it is intended for the claimed ranges to be measured in daltons; col. 15, lines 19-21, where PEG-8000, a polyethylene glycol with a molecular weight of 8000 daltons was used in the examples).

With regard to claim 10, Backus teaches an embodiment of claim 8, characterized in that the poly(ethylene glycol) has a molecular weight in the range of 3000 daltons to 500,000 daltons (col. 7, lines 59-67, where it is noted that the preferred range is between about 1000 to about 20,000, wherein the term about represents +/-10% and wherein the preferred range of molecular weights falls within the range as claimed, presuming that it is intended for the claimed ranges to be measured in daltons; col. 15, lines 19-21, where PEG-8000, a polyethylene glycol with a molecular weight of 8000 daltons was used in the examples).

With regard to claim 11, Backus teaches an embodiment of claim 8, characterized in that the poly(ethylene glycol) has a molecular weight of about 8000 daltons (col. 7, lines 59-67, where it is noted that the preferred range is between about 1000 to about 20,000, wherein the term about represents +/-10% and wherein the preferred range of molecular weights falls within

the range as claimed, presuming that it is intended for the claimed ranges to be measured in Daltons; col. 15, lines 19-21, where PEG-8000, a polyethylene glycol with a molecular weight of 8000 daltons was used in the examples).

With regard to claim 16, Backus teaches an embodiment of claim 5, characterized in that the polyacrylate is selected from the group consisting of poly(hydroxyethyl acrylate) or poly(2,3-dihydroxypropyl acrylate) (col. 8, lines 12-15).

With regard to claim 23-24, Backus teaches an embodiment of claim 1, 2 or 4, wherein the volume exclusion agent is present in said reaction mixture in a concentration of 1-15 weight $ or 1-8 weight % (?).

Regarding claims 1, 2 and 4, while Backus teaches a reversibly modified thermostable DNA polymerase, Backus does not teach a modification that comprises a chemical modification as established in the specification. Birch teaches the reversible modification of DNA polymerase by an inhibiting agent (Abstract).

With regard to claims 1, 2 and 4, Birch teaches a chemically-modified thermostable hot start DNA polymerase enzyme that becomes active only after incubation at temperatures above 50°C (Abstract; col. 4, lines 49-58, where the reversibly inactivated enzyme is a thermostable DNA polymerase; col. 3, lines 1-19, where a DNA polymerase is reversibly inactivated using treatment with a modifier reagent and becomes active at a temperature of about 50 °C, col. 3, lines 44-51).

Furthermore, regarding claims 1, 2 and 4, neither Backus nor Birch explicitly teach that the two or more target nucleic acids are present at comparable copy numbers whereas the maximum difference between the lowest and the highest copy number is 10 fold. Regarding

claims 2 and 4, Backus does not teach that the reaction mixture comprises a sequence specific probe which binds within the primer binding regions and which generates a fluorescent signal after hybridization.

Bustin teaches an overview of the quantitation of mRNA using a variety of methods, including quantitative real-time RT-PCR, a method which incorporates a variety of means of detection, including hybridization probes (Abstract).

With regard to claims 1-2 and 4, Bustin teaches the coamplification of nucleic acids which are present at comparable copy numbers, wherein the maximum difference between the lowest and highest copy number is 10-fold (p. 182, col. 1, 2nd paragraph, where the normalization of quantification of a target nucleic acid is accomplished through co-amplification of an internal control target sequence, referred to as an endogenous control. It is also noted that the endogenous control should be expressed at roughly the same level as the RNA under study; see also p. 185, 'multiplex RT-PCR' heading, where multiple primer sets are used to amplify multiple specific targets simultaneously).

With regard to claims 2-4, Bustin discloses a sequence specific probe which binds within the primer binding regions and which generates a fluorescent signal after hybridization (Figure 3 and p. 174, where molecular beacon probes were described; Figure 4A-C right side and p. 177, where 'hybdrization probes' were described; Figure 5, p. 177, where TaqMan hydrolysis probes were described).

It would have been *prima facie* obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have extended the teachings of Backus to incorporate the fluorescent hybridization probes and coamplification of a target sequence of comparable copy number of